

REMARKS

At the outset, Applicant wishes to express appreciation to Examiner King for determining that claims 1-6, 16-21, 30, 31, 37 and 50-62 are allowable.

With respect to the rejection of claim 32, the Official Action provides:

In response to applicant's argument that Yeager does not disclose one or more rows of holes disposed within a stiffener region, the region wherein the holes are disposed in Yeager may be broadly construed as a stiffener region, applicant does not further define exactly what the stiffener region entails and thus, Yeager meets this limitation. Although the claims are interpreted in light of the specification, limitations from the specification are not read into the claims.

Applicant respectfully disagrees with that characterization of Yeager. However, to advance the application to allowance, Applicant has amended claim 32 to recite that one or more rows of fastener-receiving holes extend through a portion of the second connector plate and that an endless stiffener channel substantially encircles the portion of said second connector plate containing the one or more rows of fastener holes. Support for that amendment may be found in paragraph [0025]- lines 5 and 6, paragraph [0030], lines 3 and 4, and Figure 4 of the subject application as originally filed.

It is clear that the ribs of Yeager do not substantially encircle the portion of the plate in which the holes are located, nor does Zuppan disclose such structure. Thus, claim 32 as amended is in condition for allowance.

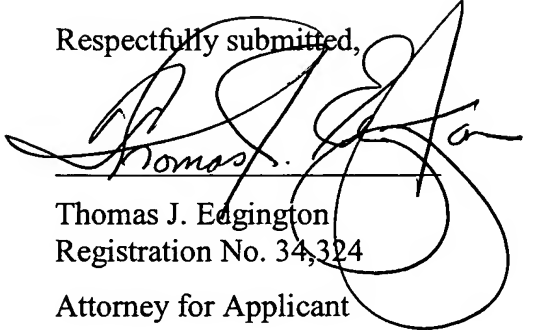
Also in the present Amendment, Applicant has amended claim 55 to correct a typographical error and to remove the term "elongated". Claims 63-67 are new and are narrow in some respects that previously allowed claims 55-59. Thus, they too are in condition for allowance.

Applicant submits that all of the pending claims are in condition for allowance. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections in the Official Action and passage to allowance of all the pending claims at an early date are earnestly solicited. However, if the Examiner has any remaining concerns regarding Applicant's present Amendment, she is invited

Application Serial No. 10/732,753
Amendment dated August 8, 2006
Reply to Official Action of June 6, 2006

to contact the Applicant's undersigned attorney at the telephone number listed below so that those concerns may be expeditiously addressed.

Respectfully submitted,



Thomas J. Edgington
Registration No. 34,324
Attorney for Applicant

Kirkpatrick & Lockhart Nicholson Graham LLP
Henry W. Oliver Building
535 Smithfield Street
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15222
(412) 355-8303